

U.S. Planting Seeds Sowing Big Sales in Japan

The United States captured just over one-third of the Japanese market for planting seeds in 2000, racking up \$48 million in sales, according to Japanese import statistics. By volume, U.S. seed exports to this market declined slightly to 13,834 metric tons, 15 percent of the market. Japan's planting seed imports from all countries totaled \$139.7 million in 2000, down slightly from the previous year.

Seeds of Success—and Some Caveats

Several factors make Japan a solid market for U.S. planting seeds. Phytosanitary barriers do not significantly impede seed imports. Moreover, Japan subscribes to the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants, so regis-



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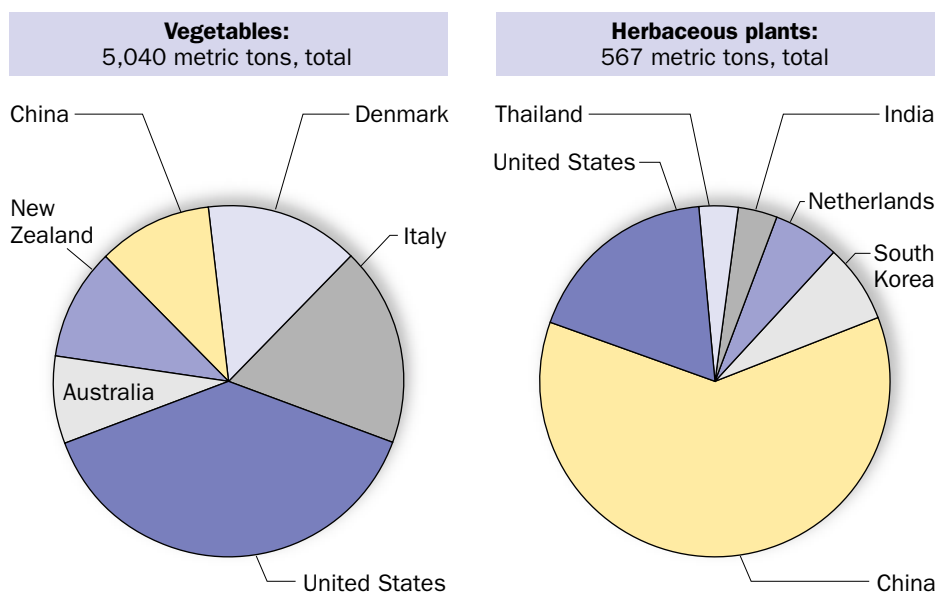
Seed Variety Applications Up, Registrations Down

Because of the lengthy procedural requirements for seed applications in Japan (sometimes taking several years), there is no direct connection between applications and registrations for any given year.

	Applications		Registrations	
	1999	2000	1999	2000
Edible crops	43	47	45	63
Vegetables	47	61	44	46
Fruits	25	40	42	43
Forage crops	6	10	11	1
Herbaceous plants	548	557	607	572
Ornamental plants	133	203	185	153
Others	19	24	20	27
Total	821	942	954	905

Calendar years.

In 2000, the United States Ranked Among Japan's Top Suppliers in Two Major Seed Groups





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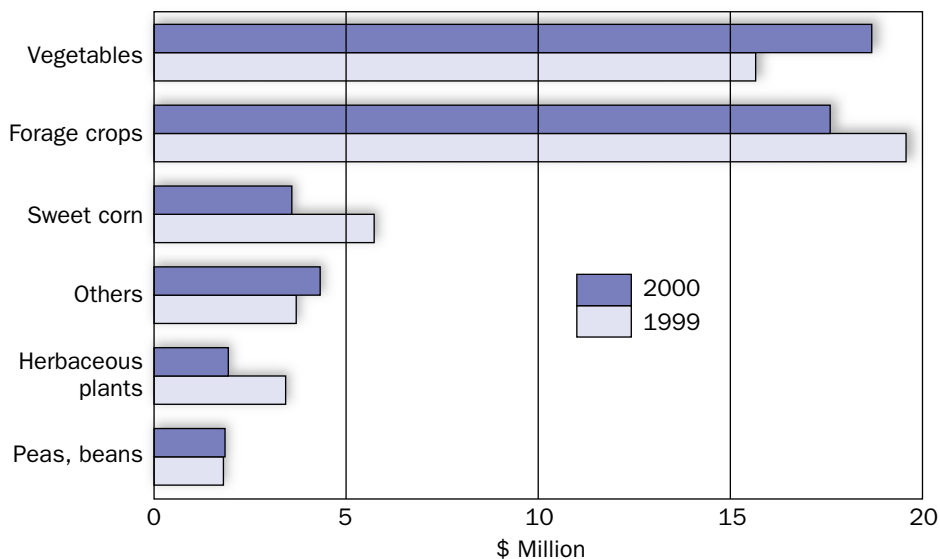
tered breeds are protected, including seeds developed through biotechnology.

High though they were, U.S. planting seed sales were likely constrained by a media campaign in June 2001 undertaken by a consumer group, reporting that two biotech varieties had been detected in Japanese imports of corn seed from the United States and marketed as non-biotech. Although both of the biotech varieties have Japanese approval for use as feed and food, they are not approved for planting.

In response, the Japan Seed Trade Association issued a report explaining the farming practices involved and refuting the possibility of cross-pollination. The association also initiated a program of voluntary labeling of packages of non-biotech seeds for the retail trade—a move that indicates the Japanese planting seed industry remains seriously concerned about biotech products.

Japan instituted new product labeling requirements, effective April 2001. Not surprisingly, these developments have increased

U.S. Planting Seed Sales Spanned Several Categories



Calendar years.

importers' and producers' reliance on identity-preserved, non-biotech products. They are also likely to restrain demand for U.S. biotech planting seeds in the near term.

Varieties—the Spice of Life

The number of new seed varieties developed worldwide has burgeoned recently, especially in the herbaceous and ornamental plant sectors.

In 2000, the Japanese government received 942 applications for registration of new seed varieties from individuals, seed companies, food makers, agricultural cooperatives and research institutions—up from 821 in 1999. The number of new variety registrations issued by the Japanese government in 2000 was 905, down from 954 the previous year.

Nevertheless, the acceleration of applications for new seed varieties demonstrates vibrant research activity, and bodes well for market development and future commercial demand. ■



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For details on Japan's market for planting seeds, see FAS Report JA1086. To find it on the Web, start at www.fas.usda.gov, select **Attaché Reports** and follow the prompts.

